

Get to  
know the

# *i-codes*

This is the eighth in a series of publications exploring the differences between the Uniform and International Codes (I-Codes). Topics covered in the series include means of egress, building uses, heights and areas, types of construction, fire-resistance-rated assemblies, accessibility, structural provisions, and the residential and mechanical codes. Additional topics may be added in 2004.

## Sprinkler Systems

### About the Codes

The 2003 editions of the International Building, Residential, Mechanical and Fire Codes (I-Codes) replaced the Uniform Codes in Seattle on Aug. 15, 2004\*.

Copies can be purchased from the Public Resource Center (PRC), 20th floor, Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8467, or:

- WA Assn. of Building Officials  
(360) 586-6725, [www.wabo.org](http://www.wabo.org)
- International Code Council (ICC)  
(800) 284-4406, [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org)

### — I-Codes Training

I-Code trainings are offered by the following organizations:

- WA Assn. of Building Officials  
(360) 586-6725, [www.wabo.org](http://www.wabo.org)
- International Code Council  
(800) 284-4406, [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org)
- American Inst. of Architects-Seattle, (206) 448-4938  
[www.aiaseattle.org](http://www.aiaseattle.org)
- Structural Engineers Assn. of WA  
(206) 682-6026, [www.seaw.org](http://www.seaw.org)
- Building Industry Assn. of WA  
(360) 352-7800, [www.biaw.com](http://www.biaw.com)
- Master Builders Assn. of King & Snohomish Counties  
(425) 451-7920, [www.mba-ks.com](http://www.mba-ks.com)

### — Technical Code Support

- Building Code  
(206) 684-4630  
Hours: M-F, 1 p.m.-4:15 p.m.
- Electrical Code  
(206) 684-5383  
Hours: M/W/F, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
Tu/Th, 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
- Energy/Mechanical Code  
(206) 684-7846  
Hours: M-F, 1 p.m.-4:15 p.m.

### Fire Sprinklers in the 2003 Seattle Building Code

A fundamental principle of the International Building Code (IBC) is to encourage the installation of sprinkler systems. In fact, the IBC provides many benefits to buildings with sprinkler systems, including:

- additional stories, height and area allowed by Sections 504 and 506;
- residential occupancies need not have emergency escape and rescue openings according to Section 1025;
- the maximum allowable quantities of many hazardous materials are increased; and
- an increase in the area of unprotected openings in exterior walls in buildings protected with sprinklers is allowed in Section 704.8.

In addition, the IBC requires sprinkler systems in a few instances where the current code does not. One example is residential occupancies. The current Seattle code requires sprinklers in three-story residential buildings, and in buildings with two floors of residences above other occupancies. The International Residential Code (IRC) does not require sprinklers, except in the uncommon circumstance where the distance to a fire hydrant is too great. The IBC will require sprinklers in all buildings with a residential occupancy. In Seattle, this change will mainly affect two-story multifamily buildings other than townhouses.

Another difference between the current code and the IBC is the sprinkler requirement for assembly occupancies. An amendment to the IBC provision was adopted by the State of Washington in response to last year's nightclub fires and the IBC's threshold for sprinklers in nightclubs was reduced from 300 to 100; the Uniform Building Code (UBC) threshold for assembly occupancies used for consumption of alcohol was 5,000 square feet or approximately 330 occupants.

A third difference is that buildings over 55 feet in height will be required to have sprinkler systems, in contrast to the 1997 Building Code which required sprinklers in buildings of 75 feet and higher.



The IBC requires sprinklers in all two-story multifamily buildings other than town houses.



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Technical Codes website:  
**[www.seattle.gov/  
dpd/techcodes](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/techcodes)**